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**By Michael Shingleton**

**BATON ROUGE** The Jetson Center for Youth was once set to close for good, but downsizing and a shift in focus led to another chance from the legislature and a lower rate of returning juveniles.



Since 2008, the number of youths in the facility has dropped from 195 to 73; the faculty has also been cut in half. At the same time, there have been less than five repeat visitors over the last three years.

David Fontenot has been serving time at the center for three years, and says when he first arrived the large youth population was uncooperative with the guards and fought each other constantly.

"There's a lot of people... so it was easier for stuff to happen," he told News 2.

Cutting down the population and focusing on rehabilitation led to smaller class sizes and more personal attention to individual youth. Fontenot said the hands-on approach in the classroom dramatically improved the quality of life.

"The education is better... the teachers can come to you more and work with you on a one-on-one basis," he said.

Before, youth who fought were separated; now they are brought together so they can talk out their differences. There's also a focus on teaching the youth a trade they can go into once their sentence ends and they leave Jetson.

"What we're really trying to do is normalize the experience for kids and really rev them up to be successful when they go back into the community," said Sean Hamilton with the center.